

## Nature and Society: An Introduction to Environmental Studies

Time: Monday / Thursday 1:10 - 2:25 pm  
Location: Hopkins Hall 002  
Instructor: Professor Laura Martin  
Office: Environmental Center Room 217  
Email: [LJM4@williams.edu](mailto:LJM4@williams.edu)  
Office Hours: Monday 2:30-4:00pm and by appointment



*Deer on the Oostvaarderplassen, CBC-TV "Manufacturing the Wild," 2015*

### Course Description

Environment and society interact on scales from the local to the global. This course explores these interactions and introduces students to the interdisciplinary methods of environmental studies. We will investigate the historical development of environmental problems — including pollution, land grabbing, and species extinction — and their possible solutions. We will survey policy-making and activism in a variety of contexts and will examine art, literature, film, music, maps, advertisements, and other cultural objects. Throughout the course, we will ask how unequal distributions of power affect people and environments. Case studies, readings, discussions, and field exercises will help students develop their understanding how natural systems influence and are influenced by human activities.

Three goals will guide us throughout the course:

- (1) to understand how social, political, cultural, economic, and ecological processes have interacted to create the world we inhabit today;
- (2) to become conversant with the key questions and tools of environmental studies;
- (3) to cultivate ways of thinking critically and creatively about the future of the environment

## Course Organization

This course will meet twice a week for 75-minute sessions. Class time is divided between short lectures, discussion, and in-class activities. Please bring the **readings** and your **notes** to each class session.

Readings listed on the schedule below must be completed before class meetings. Lectures and readings are closely related. Come prepared to talk about each reading in detail.

## Office Hours

Monday 2:30-4:00pm or by appointment (email). Visit office hours with questions about readings, lectures, the environmental studies program, or just to chat!

## Required Texts

- Two course readers, which are available for pick-up at the Center for Environmental Studies
- Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Devi Lockwood, *1,001 Voices on Climate Change* (Tiller Press, 2021)

## Assignments

Your success in this course will require careful reading of assigned texts, diligent attention to material presented in lectures, punctual and regular attendance, engaged participation, and timely completion of assignments. The relative weight of assignments is summarized below. You must complete all of the assignments in order to pass the course.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of final grade</u>
Participation	15%
Futures Essay	20%
Policy Op-Ed	20%
Midterm	20%
Final	25%

## Participation

Although this course is listed as a “lecture” course, we will engage in regular small group and whole-class discussion. Participation encompasses attendance, in-class writing assignments, and regular and relevant contributions to class discussions. Your participation is vital to the success of this class.

## Essays

You will write two short essays (2-3 pages) over the course of the semester. The futures essay will be due October 8. The policy op-ed will be due December 15. Further instructions will be handed out in class.

## Exams

There will be two take-home exams consisting of short essay questions. Further instructions will be handed out in class.

## Lecture Response

For this extra credit assignment (2 points toward your final grade), attend a lecture of your choice at Williams or in the surrounding area. It can be about any topic within environmental studies. You will then write a response paper (~500 words) and submit it via GLOW no later than 12/11.

Some places to look for lectures:

- Every Friday CES Log Lunch hosts a speaker. Free for first years, otherwise \$4, financial aid available
- Center for Environmental Studies (<https://ces.williams.edu/>)
- The Davis Center (<https://davis-center.williams.edu/>)
- The Zilkha Center (<https://sustainability.williams.edu/zilkha-center>)
- Williams events calendar (<https://events.williams.edu/>)
- The Williams College Museum of Art, Clark Art Institute, and MASS MoCA

Response papers summarize and evaluate arguments for a reader who was not in the audience. They are not statements of opinion. As such, comments like “the lecture was interesting” are not useful. Instead, in a response paper you should discern: (a) what point the lecturer was trying to get across, (b) what strengths and weaknesses existed in the evidence used to support the argument; (c) how the lecture connects to course readings, lectures, and/or discussions; and (d) what questions you are left with after attending the lecture.

Response papers serve three important functions. First, they require you to concisely articulate the argument(s) provided by the lecturer (or, in other cases, author or filmmaker). This helps you

become a more active critical viewer/reader, which means you ask questions, rather than passively accept any argument made from a position of authority. Response papers also help me assess how well you are comprehending the course material. Finally, and most importantly, a response paper should aid in your quest to identify your own intellectual interests.

For further guidance, see the excerpts in the course packet from Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (W.W. Norton, 2010).

## **Creating a Supportive Learning Environment**

Be inclusive. In this course we will discuss issues regarding personal and communal identity, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, national origin, and ability. It is essential that we all – and at all times – cultivate mutual respect. We are here to learn and grow together. If you have any concerns about classroom climate, please share them with me.

Be present. This means attending to the collective project and being aware that you are constructing the learning environment with your peers. All phones should be put away inside a bag, on silent mode, at the beginning of class and not be used or visible until class has concluded.

Challenge yourself to be the best classmate you can be. This doesn't mean that you need to be the first to raise your hand every time, but you should try to push your comfort zone a little. If you know you tend to the quiet side in class, try to speak up more than you ordinarily would, because your thoughts are valuable and your classmates want to hear them. Alternatively, if you know you're the kind of person who always speaks first (or loudest), then try to sit back and listen more than your instincts tell you.

## **COVID-19**

It is of the utmost importance to protect ourselves and one another from COVID-19. If you feel under the weather, do not come to class. Email me as soon as possible and we will make arrangements to cover missed course content.

Please let me know if you are unable to attend class due to COVID restrictions. I will work with you to develop a plan that allows you to continue making progress in the course during your time in quarantine.

## **Policies**

### Contact

I use email regularly to make announcements, clarify points from lecture, and draw your attention to events and news items. You are expected to check your email daily. Email is also the best way to get in touch with me, and I reply during normal business hours.

Lectures and discussion sections may not be recorded without my explicit permission.

### Devices

Phones must be in your bag & in silent mode

Laptops / tablets:

- Cardinal rule: don't distract others
- Unless you need to be looking at something at that particular moment, keep your computer closed
- Brightness turned down
- Different people will need computers at different times; just because someone has theirs out doesn't mean yours needs to be

How you (the students) will enforce those rules:

- The first time someone distracts you, gently tap their computer so they know to stop
- The second time it happens, say something to them quietly without making your interaction a distraction to others
- The second time, put your computer away for the duration of class
- If you get double-tapped more than once, bring it to my attention

### Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will decrease your final grade, as will habitual lateness. If you cannot attend class, you must email me by noon before our meeting. If you have any concerns about your ability to meet these requirements, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester.

### Late assignments

If you must miss a deadline, it is incumbent upon you to communicate that in advance of the deadline and to tell me when I will receive your work. To the degree that late work affects your ability to participate in class or master the material, it will affect your grade.

### Grades

The course grading system coincides with the Williams College system of grades, where A=excellent; B=good; C=fair; D=passing; and E=failing. Note that the grades I assign represent

my evaluation of the work you turn in. They in no way indicate my opinion of you as a person or the views you hold and share.

### Honor Code

Please re-acquaint yourself with the college Honor Code (<http://sites.williams.edu/honor-system/>). I have re-printed a useful section here:

The basic rules of attribution for all academic assignments, including homework, require that:

1. A direct quotation (whether a single word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or series of paragraphs) must always be identified by quotation marks, by indenting and single spacing, or by reduced type size of the quoted material, and a note must be used to state the exact source.
2. A paraphrase of the work of another must be acknowledged as such by a note stating the source.
3. Indebtedness to the specific ideas of others, or the summarizing of several pages, even though expressed in different words, must be acknowledged by a note stating the source.
4. In every instance, the use of another student's laboratory reports, computer programs, or other material must be acknowledged by a note.
5. Even the use of a student's own previous or concurrent work must be acknowledged; thus, a student must obtain the prior permission of both the previous and current instructors before submitting all or part of the same paper in more than one course.

NOTE: Attempts to gain academic advantage by misleading a professor are violations of the Honor Code. For example, if a student claims to have handed in an assignment, that work must actually have been submitted.

Although I encourage you to share ideas, strategies, and resources with your classmates, it is vital that you be graded on your work and your work alone. Williams takes charges of cheating and plagiarism very seriously, and either can result in your dismissal. Cheating is taking advantage of the work of others. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own without giving appropriate credit. If you are uncertain how the Honor Code applies to your work in this course – or if you are unsure how to distinguish between legitimate collaboration with your colleagues and academic dishonesty – please ask me.

### **Resources**

Students with disabilities of any kind who may need accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Dr. GL Wallace (Director of Accessible Education) at 413-597-4672.

Students experiencing mental or physical health challenges that are significantly affecting their academic work or well-being are encouraged to contact me and to speak with a dean so we can help you find the right resources. The deans can be reached at 413-597-4171.

As a Williams student, you can use the free tutoring services provided by the Peer Academic Support network. Step-by-step instructions for scheduling tutoring sessions are on the Peer Tutoring Program webpage (<http://academic-resources.williams.edu/peer-tutor-program/>).

The Writing Workshop (<http://writing-programs.williams.edu/writing-workshop/>) is available to all students free of charge. Drop in sessions are located in the foyer of Stetson-Sawyer library. You can also schedule hour-long appointments through the online scheduler. The Writing Workshop also offers a Writing Partner service to support students who may need more attention and guidance than can be provided within a regular Writing Workshop session.

Hale Polebaum-Freeman is the library liaison for environmental studies and is also available to provide guidance. They can be reached at [hop1@williams.edu](mailto:hop1@williams.edu).

Week 1: Introduction	
THURS 9/09	<p>Welcome!</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> April Anson, “No One Is A Virus: On American Ecofascism,” October 21, 2020, <a href="https://envhistnow.com/2020/10/21/no-one-is-the-virus-on-american-ecofascism/">https://envhistnow.com/2020/10/21/no-one-is-the-virus-on-american-ecofascism/</a></p>

## UNIT ONE: CLIMATE CHANGE

Week 2: Climate Change 101	
MON 9/13	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Adam Vaughan, “How Viral Cat Videos Are Warming the Planet,” <i>The Guardian</i>, September 25, 2015.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Jeff Tollefson, “IPCC climate report: Earth is Warmer than it’s been in 125,000 years,” <i>Nature News</i>, August 9, 2021.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excerpts from IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, Summary for Policymakers</p> <p>Lecture: The IPCC and International Climate Negotiation</p>
THURS 9/16	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Ayana Johnson and Katharine Wilkinson, “Introduction,” Xiye Bastida, “Calling In,” and Rhiana Gunn-Wright, “A Green New Deal for All of Us,” in <i>All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis</i> (New York: One World, 2020).</p> <p>Lecture: Global Energy History and the Discovery of Climate Change</p>

Week 3: Climate Controversy	
MON 9/20	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 3 of Michael Hulme, <i>Why We Disagree About Climate Change</i></p> <p>Lecture: The Politics of Climate Science</p>
THURS 9/23	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 6 of Michael Hulme, <i>Why We Disagree About Climate Change</i></p> <p>Lecture: Climate Change Partisanship</p>

Week 4: Climate Justice	
MON 9/27	<p><input type="checkbox"/> “Introduction,” “Tuvalu,” “China,” and “Morocco: UN Climate Talks” in Devi Lockwood, <i>1,001 Voices on Climate Change</i></p> <p>Zoom Guest: <a href="#">Devi Lockwood</a>, author of <i>1,001 Voices on Climate Change</i></p>

<b>THURS 9/30</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch <i>The Island President</i> (2011; 101 min) on GLOW course site (click on Pages) <input type="checkbox"/> Betsy Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse,” <i>Journal of International Development</i> 22 (2010); 233-246. Lecture: Climate Justice and Refugeeism
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### Week 5: Climate Solutions

<b>TUES 10/04</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Shinichiro Asayama <i>et al.</i> , “Why setting a Climate Deadline is Dangerous,” <i>Nature Climate Change</i> 9 (2019): 570-572. <input type="checkbox"/> Christopher Jones, “Building More Just Energy Infrastructure: Lessons from the Past,” <i>Science as Culture</i> 22 (2013): 157-163. Lecture: Mitigation and Adaptation
<b>THURS 10/07</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> BBC Radio 4, “Is This Something I should be Doing?” May 20, 2020 ( <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000j80r">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000j80r</a> , 28 min) Lecture: Carbon Offsets and Net Zero
<b>FRI 10/08</b>	Futures Essay Due

## UNIT TWO: BIOTIC CHANGE

### Week 6: Biodiversity Loss

<b>MON 10/11</b>	BREAK
<b>THURS 10/14</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Brian Resnick and Javier Zarracina, “All life on Earth, in One Staggering Chart,” <i>Vox</i> , August 15, 2018, at <a href="https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/5/29/17386112/all-life-on-earth-chart-weight-plants-animals-pnas">https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/5/29/17386112/all-life-on-earth-chart-weight-plants-animals-pnas</a> <input type="checkbox"/> Jonathan Franzen, “Carbon Capture: Has Climate Change Made It Harder for People to Care about Conservation?” <i>The New Yorker</i> , 6 April 2015. <input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Kolbert, “The Forest and the Trees,” in <i>The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History</i> (Henry Holt, 2014) :148-172. Lecture: Biodiversity Loss and the Anthropocene

### Week 7: What is Natural?

<b>MON 10/18</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” <i>Environmental History</i> (1996): 7-28. <input type="checkbox"/> Mark Spence, “First Wilderness: America’s Wonderland and Indian Removal from Yellowstone National Park,” in <i>Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of National Parks</i> (Oxford University Press, 1999): 55-70.
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	Lecture: Wilderness by Design
<b>THURS 10/21</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Hunted,” <i>The New Yorker</i> , 5 April 2010. <input type="checkbox"/> Jacob Dlamini, “What Training as a Field Guide Taught Jacob Dlamini about Culture, Nature, Power, and Race,” <i>The Johannesburg Review of Books</i> , July 1, 2019. Lecture: Colonial Nature and Conservation Refugees
<b>FRI 10/22</b>	Exam 1 Due

### Week 8: Food Systems

<b>MON 10/25</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> William Cronon, “Annihilating Space: Meat,” in <i>Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West</i> (Norton, 1991): 207-259. <input type="checkbox"/> Michael Grabell, “Exploitation and Abuse at the Chicken Plant,” <i>The New Yorker</i> , 8 May 2017. Lecture: Food Systems Over Time
<b>THURS 10/28</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Vann R. Newkirk II, “The Great Land Robbery,” <i>The Atlantic</i> , September 2019. <input type="checkbox"/> Leah Penniman, “Farming While Black,” Williams College, November 2019, at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZkQwhKWqnA&amp;ab_channel=WilliamsCollege">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZkQwhKWqnA&amp;ab_channel=WilliamsCollege</a> <input type="checkbox"/> H. Claire Brown, “Attack of the Superweeds,” <i>New York Times</i> , August 18, 2021, at <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/18/magazine/superweeds-monsanto.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/18/magazine/superweeds-monsanto.html</a> Lecture: Food Justice and Agricultural Reform

### Week 9: Biotic Solutions

<b>MON 11/01</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Thom van Dooren, “Invasive Species in Penguin Worlds: An Ethical Taxonomy of Killing for Conservation,” <i>Conservation &amp; Society</i> (2011): 286-298. <input type="checkbox"/> Kevin Esvelt, “When are We Obligated to Edit Wild Creatures?” <i>Leaps Magazine</i> , May 28, 2018. Lecture: Conservation and Restoration
<b>THURS 11/04</b>	Zoom Guest: <a href="#">Lindi von Mutius</a> (Class of ’03), The Trust for Public Land

## UNIT THREE: CHEMICAL CHANGE

### Week 10: Pollution 101

<b>MON 11/08</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Rachel Carson, “A Fable for Tomorrow” and “The Obligation to Endure,” in <i>Silent Spring</i> (Houghton Mifflin, 2002 [1962]): 1-13. <input type="checkbox"/> Rosanna Xia, “LA’s Coast Was Once a DDT Dumping Ground,” <i>LA Times</i> , October 25, 2020, at <a href="https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-coast-ddt-dumping-ground/">https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-coast-ddt-dumping-ground/</a>
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	Lecture: Pollution's Long History
<b>THURS 11/11</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Altman, "Time-bombing The Future," <i>Aeon</i> , January 2, 2019. <input type="checkbox"/> The Memory Palace, Episode 139: 1,347 Birds, March 2019 ( <a href="https://themorypalace.us/1347-birds/">https://themorypalace.us/1347-birds/</a> ; 9 minutes), and look at photographs here: <a href="https://www.pnas.org/content/114/43/11321">https://www.pnas.org/content/114/43/11321</a> Lecture: Legacy Pollutants

<b>Week 11: Environmental Justice</b>	
<b>MON 11/15</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Excerpts from Commission for Racial Justice, <i>Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States</i> (United Church of Christ, 1987). <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Bullard, "Environmentalism and Social Justice," in <i>Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality</i> (Westview Press, 1990): 1-8. Lecture: EJ as a Movement and Discipline
<b>THURS 11/18</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Mario Alejandro Ariza, "Come Heat and High Water," <i>The Believer</i> . November 30, 2018

<b>Week 12: Waste</b>	
<b>MON 11/22</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Adam Rome, "Fashion Forward? Reflections on the Environmental History of Style," <i>Environmental History</i> 23 (2018): 545-566. <input type="checkbox"/> Emily Brownell, "Negotiating the New Economic Order of Waste," <i>Environmental History</i> 16 (2011): 262-289. <input type="checkbox"/> Gabrielle Hecht, "Human Crap," <i>Aeon</i> , March 20, 2020. Lecture: Discard Studies
<b>THURS 11/25</b>	BREAK

<b>Week 13: Environmental Hope</b>	
<b>MON 11/29</b>	Zoom Guest: Dr. <a href="#">Trisha Shrum</a> , Founder of <a href="#">DearTomorrow</a>
<b>THURS 12/02</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ted Steinberg, "Can Capitalism Save the Planet? On the Origins of Green Liberalism," <i>Radical History Review</i> 107 (2010): 7-24. <input type="checkbox"/> Distillations, Episode 232: Fighting Smog in Los Angeles, June 26, 2018 ( <a href="https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/podcast/fighting-smog-in-los-angeles">https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/podcast/fighting-smog-in-los-angeles</a> ; 40 min) Lecture: Environmental Governance vs. Consumer Choice
<b>FRI 12/03</b>	Exam 2 Due

Week 14: Environmental Hope	
MON 12/06	<input type="checkbox"/> Rivka Galchen, “How South Korea is Composting its Way to Sustainability,” <i>The New Yorker</i> , March 9, 2020. <input type="checkbox"/> Holly Buck, “On the Possibilities of a Charming Anthropocene,” <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 105 (2015): 369-377.
THURS 12/09	Discussion
WEDS 12/15	Solutions Essay Due

